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SPECIAL.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY.

PRODUCING SHEEP ON SOUTHERN FARMS.

PREPARED IN THE BUREAU OF ANIMAL INDUSTRY.

Sheep have a place on southern farms. By keeping a flock of from 6 to 12 ewes, farmers in that section can provide themselves with meat for the table, sell a few lambs for mutton, and secure additional revenues through the sale of wool. For those who have no sheep, let us consider just how to get started in the business with a small outlay of capital and how to handle the flock after obtaining it.

CHOOSING AND BUYING BREEDING EWES AND RAMS.

Your first ewes can be native ewes, purchased from near-by sheep owners. Go into a flock and pick out vigorous ewes with compact bodies. Get young, healthy ewes. If you must buy old ones, do not take those having spread, broken, or worn-off teeth. Such ewes can not eat well and will make no money as breeders for their purchasers.

Do not use anything but good rams of a mutton breed upon your ewes. A Southdown, Shropshire, Hampshire, or Dorset Horn ram will prove most desirable. He should be about 2 years of age, healthy, and carry plenty of mutton. Such a ram will cost, delivered, from \$15 to \$25, and can be bought by a half dozen farmers clubbed together. He will breed from 40 to 60 ewes.

PROTECTION FROM STORMS AND DOGS.

Sheep do not require closed buildings for protection from cold, as their fleeces afford protection if kept dry. A low shed, built on dry ground and opening to the south, is sufficient. Such a shed need cost but very little, as scraps of lumber about the farm can be utilized in building it.

Place your flocks within a dog-proof fenced inclosure at night, as dogs often attack and destroy sheep. A fence that will turn a dog must be at least 50 inches high, have a barbed wire stretched flat to the surface of the ground at its bottom, and three barbed wires 7 inches apart stretched at its top. The space between the barbed wires can be filled in with old boards, poles, or any other fence-building material, provided it is so built as to keep the dog from crawling through.

NOTE.—Intended for farmers in the cotton belt who desire to diversify their farming because of the economic crisis which adversely affects the cotton crop at this time.

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GENERAL CARE OF THE EWES.

Often ewes become "taggy" or have dungy locks collect on the wool about the tail and between the hind legs. Such locks should be cut off and the ewes kept clean about this part of the body.

Ticks and lice frequently infect sheep. Guard against this by dipping once each year in dips sold for this purpose. A rain barrel or tub can be used to hold the dip. Pick the sheep up bodily and work it around gradually in the dip until all parts are submerged and drenched to the skin.

Keep salt before the flock at all times. Sheep require a great deal of salt and it is essential for them.

PASTURES, FORAGES, AND ROUGHAGES.

Give the sheep access to all harvested and vacated fields, but do not depend entirely upon such forages. The ideal way is to provide lots of forages of such size as will pasture the flocks for only two week periods during warm weather. By changing the pasturing ground of lambs every two weeks there is little danger of loss from stomach worms, as clean pastures do not infect sheep. Rape, cow-peas, oats, vetch, crimson clover, and soy beans should constitute the principal forages used. During the fall and winter permanent pastures can be used. Even regular fields of winter wheat and barley can be pastured without injury to them.

When pasture is not available feed hay or fodder to the flock. Keep up the appetites of the ewes by adding small quantities of rape, collards, chopped cabbage, or roots along with the hay. Do not feed sugar beets and mangel-wurzels to your rams or wethers.

GRAIN RATIONS.

Begin feeding the ewes a little grain about two weeks before lambing and gradually increase the amount to one-half pound daily at that time. After lambing, slowly increase the amount to $1\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 pounds daily, and continue this ration during the suckling period. Ewes need not be grained when dry if good pasture is provided.

Give the ram just enough grain to keep him in good condition. The amount fed should be increased during the breeding season.

Teach the lambs to eat grain as soon as possible after birth, and continually feed them what they will eat up cleanly until ready for the market. Feed them twice daily, using creeps¹ to keep out the ewes.

The following grain ration, generally available on the farm, is suitable for sheep: Corn, 3 parts by weight; cottonseed meal, 1 part by weight.

THE BREEDING AND LAMBING SEASON.

Probably August and September are the best months for mating, as this will bring your lambs in January and February. Do not leave the ram with the ewes continually, but take the ewes to him for a few minutes each morning. Allow only one service to a ewe during each period of heat, but be certain that the ewe gets in lamb before dropping breeding operation.

¹ A creep is an inclosure, containing feed troughs, with openings large enough to permit only the lambs to enter.

Watch the ewes carefully during the lambing season, but do not interfere with them unless necessary. After lambs are born, see that they are promptly dried and suckled. Frequently ewes disown their lambs unless forced to nurse them.

Give the ewe little, if any, grain ration for two or three days after lambing. At the expiration of this time it can be gradually given her until the full ration is reached.

SHEARING SHEEP AND CARE OF THE FLEECE.

In small flocks the fleeces can be most economically removed by using hand shears. After the sheep is shorn remove all tags and burs from the fleece, carefully roll it up inside out, and tie neatly with cotton or paper string. If only a few fleeces are had they can be placed in clean gunny sacks and sold to local dealers. If there is a woolen mill in your vicinity perhaps it will make your wool into cloth for you.

SUMMARY OF RETURNS FROM SIX EWES.

Now let us summarize the returns to be expected from six head of properly handled ewes.

1. Four fat lambs ready for the table or market and weighing from 70 to 85 pounds when $3\frac{1}{2}$ or 4 months of age.
2. Two ewe lambs to remain in the flock.
3. One old ewe culled for the butcher.
4. Six fleeces, giving 40 pounds of wool.
5. Increased valuation in flock due to improved breeding.
6. Increased fertility of soil due to forage crops and manure produced.
7. A new source of income provided for the farm.

A SUGGESTION TO SOUTHERN FARM SHEEP OWNERS.

The following bulletins contain information that will help you get started raising sheep. They are obtainable free of charge by addressing the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.:

Farmers' Bulletin 576. Breeds of Sheep for the Farm.

Farmers' Bulletin 509. Forage Crops for the Cotton Region.

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Aug 863

